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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 000517

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH DEMOCRACY: ISOLATION AND TRADITION

REF: A. ISTANBUL 427

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1416

Classified By: Consul General Deborah K. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Sabanci University political science professor Ali Carkoglu argued in a recent meeting that traditional Kemalists - the military, the courts, Turkey's bureaucracy - are insulated from normal Turkish society and have no stake in its improvement. A siege mentality and sense of isolation is fostered from the earliest school years when children are shown a map of Turkey dismembered by the 1920 Sevres Treaty. Military officers with a desire to rise above Colonel scrupulously avoid education abroad of more than two years' duration; otherwise, superiors assume they would lose touch with the Turkish mindset. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Carkoglu, who also follows poll modeling, research methods and voting behavior, poured cold water on published "polling" saying these were mere expressions of the publisher's hunches or preferences. He decried the absence of methodological integrity in published polls in Turkey. The Turkish polling companies like ANAR, SONAR, Pollmark, and so forth, rely on untrained armies of poorly paid recruits given no direction on targeting specific respondents. Individuals hired for polling legwork lack training and may ask whomever they please, focusing on numbers rather than accurate sampling. Results generally lack minimum demographic data and control questions such as how a respondent voted in the previous election. (Note. While this may be true for many companies, some pursue more rigorous methods. End note.) Carkoglu is seeking funding for his own poll to be conducted in July focused on party preferences.

A LIBERALLY-MINDED VIEW OF THE WAY THINGS ARE

[1](#)3. (C) Apparently lacking an ideological (secularist/Kemalist/or even religious) edge, and sounding more like a U.S. liberal arts professor than one from a top Turkish institution (he has a PhD from SUNY), Carkoglu discussed his views on the current scene in Turkey. The courts, higher education system, the military and vast parts of the bureaucracy, he said, are cut off from normal society. Court justices, for instance, ride special private buses to work. Their perks, privileges and immunities insulate them from the economy, from any conflict with the justice system and from society at large. They do not want to mix with the common man. They stay within their own protected world -- including separate living compounds, restaurants and holiday resorts. Due to this privileged cocoon, they have no

personal interest in improvements to economic, social, infrastructure or other conditions.

¶4. (C) Carkoglu said that military officers can study in the U.S. (and presumably other NATO countries) no more than two years if they hope to rise above the rank of Colonel. Otherwise, the rationale goes, the officers would "think like you." Those that study in the U.S. for shorter times write regular reports and are debriefed upon their return to Turkey - at intervals and at the end of training abroad. The military, he said, is growing more rigid, fearing loss of its currently protected status.

¶5. (C) Comments by Marmara Group member Ilter Turan along with former Ambassador to the U.S. Faruk Logoglu (see Turkish Daily News op-ed May 23) at the mid-May Forum Istanbul conference tend to support Carkoglu's assessment. Ambassador Logoglu cast Turkey in the role of victim, surrounded (still) by conflict and terrorism, Iranian influence, Sunni/Shia clashes and countries lacking "democracy and secularism." Moderating one session, Ilter Turan shut down former Iraqi cabinet minister and ethnic Kurd Bakthiar Amin for arguing that Turkey's Kurdish problem is largely of its own making and that offering normal human rights to the minority would cause the PKK problem to melt away. Turan proceeded to lecture Amin about the "norms of diplomacy", saying Turkish diplomatic relations would be conducted only in diplomatic channels. Amin further rankled Turkish participants when he called for genuine dialogue to replace cheap shots in the press.

GETTING TO THE "RIGHT" VIEW

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¶6. (C) Charkoglu argues that insularity and self-righteousness begin in the first year of school, when children are shown a map of Turkey. Teachers emphasize how Turkey's enemies, (British, French, Greeks, Italians, etc.) systematically carved up the country leaving only a small, land-locked core by 1920. This history and the incessant, popular repetition of imminent threat from outside becomes an excuse to wall off enemies - and everything non-Turkish fits this enemy label, he says. Asked about the apparent good working relationship between the U.S. and Turkey's elites, Carkoglu says the good will is more expedient than genuine.

¶7. (SBU) Recently we witnessed an example of a Turkey-specific perspective when two relatively recent graduates of Ivy League professional schools, both scions of well-established holding companies in Turkey, were openly critical of U.S. motives in Iraq. They contended that no matter the official U.S. line, our intentions clearly were to create an independent Kurdistan, inevitably leading to Turkey's further geopolitical erosion. Alleged U.S. support for the ruling AK Party also tracked with a desire to weaken Turkish institutions.

¶8. (C) Choosing an electoral example to illustrate how the besieged mentality impacts society, Carkoglu said 1.5 million Turks in Europe cannot vote in Turkey's elections because they are deemed "captives of Turkey's enemies." He lamented Turkey's comparatively basic electoral democratic practices pointing out that 300,000 Bulgarian Turks resident in Turkey voted in Bulgaria's last election.

¶9. (C) Comment. The murder of Hrant Dink and the victimization of innocents in other possibly nationalist - or "enemies"-based killings underline the seriousness of the isolationist bent in Turkish society. Liberally-minded people with sufficient exposure to the world beyond Turkey, like Professor Carkoglu, agree with Armenian Patriarch Mesrob II, who urged education reform during Hrant Dink's nationally-televised funeral in January. An informed, confident public exercising its democratic prerogative may

give pause to some of those who think they know best. End
comment.
JONES